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THE CATHOLIC VIEW

OF THE

PUBLIC SCHOOL QUESTION.

A Lecture,

Delivered in the Hall of the Cooper Institute,

SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 16, 1870.

BY

✓
THE REV. THOMAS S. PRESTON.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following lecture is only the *substance* of the discourse which I had the honor to give in the Cooper Institute on Sunday evening last. I have written it out from my memory of what I then said, for two important reasons,—first, to avoid all possible misunderstanding of the Catholic view on so important a subject; and secondly, to put on record the arguments which I then brought before the American public. Many, also, who were not able to be present, may wish to know the nature of the claims which we address to that sense of justice which eminently belongs to our countrymen. The immediate occasion of the lecture is explained by the following correspondence. I take this opportunity to thank the distinguished gentlemen who honored me by their consideration, the audience who received me with so much kindness, and the esteemed members of my own congregation, to whom I feel myself largely indebted.

T. S. P.

NEW YORK, *January* 20, 1870.

CIRCULAR

ADDRESSED TO THE GENTLEMEN OF ST. ANN'S CHURCH.

NEW YORK, *December 23, 1869.*

Sir:—You are politely requested to attend a meeting of the gentlemen of ST. ANN'S CHURCH, on next Sunday, the 26th inst., at half-past four o'clock P. M., at No. 48 Fourth Avenue, for the purpose of considering the propriety of inviting Rev. FATHER PRESTON to deliver a lecture on the "PUBLIC SCHOOL QUESTION," in one of the public halls of this city, in the early part of January next.

As the above question is one which agitates the public mind at present, and as the Catholic view of it is generally misunderstood, and also misrepresented, it is of the utmost importance that our beloved pastor be invited by us to deliver a public lecture upon this question, in which he can set forth in his usual forcible, truthful, and temperate manner, the views of the Catholic Church upon education, and thus, if possible, remove some of the prejudices existing against us in the minds of our fellow-countrymen.

JOSEPH F. NAVARRO.

BME. BLANCO.

C. A. HUBBARD.

JOHN McCAHILL.

JAMES GRIFFIN.

JAMES DOOLEY.

PETER R. LALOR.

JOSEPH QUINN.

DANIEL CONNOLLY.

THOMAS BRENNAN.

AUGUSTINE KEOGH.

HON. P. C. WRIGHT.

ROBERT O'BRIEN.

D. M. HILDRETH.

G. S. BEDFORD, M. D.

JOHN OWENS.

ROBERT CODDINGTON.

P. BROPHY.

DAVID ANDERSON.

P. GARRICK.

JOHN McEWAN.

JAMES BOYLE.

LETTER OF THE COMMITTEE

APPOINTED AT THE MEETING, DECEMBER 26TH.

NEW YORK, *December 31, 1869.*

REV. THOMAS S. PRESTON.

Reverend and dear Sir:—At a meeting of gentlemen belonging to St. Ann's parish, held Sunday the 26th instant, we were appointed a Committee to request you in their behalf, to repeat your exposition of the Catholic view of the school question in one of the large halls of the city. The subject is one of such great importance, and our position in the matter is so reasonable, that we are persuaded that the majority of our countrymen need only to have our arguments properly presented them. Believing that your able and temperate treatment of the subject will subserve the cause of truth, and do much to remove prejudice and misapprehension, we have the honor to remain, with great respect,

Very truly yours,

J. F. NAVARRO,
ROBERT O'BRIEN,
C. A. HUBBARD.

REPLY.

ST. ANN'S CHURCH, }
NEW YORK, *January 2, 1870.* }

Gentlemen:—I have received your letter, asking me to present before the public of New York the Catholic view of the school question.

Feeling with you the great importance of this question, I have considered it my duty to give in my own church a brief synopsis of the sentiments generally entertained in regard to it by Catholics.

As you desire that I should treat the subject before a large audience, I accept your invitation, earnestly hoping that my humble efforts may tend to the good of religion and the welfare of our beloved country.

I will be at your service as soon as you can make the necessary arrangements.

Faithfully your servant in Christ,

THOMAS S. PRESTON.

MESSRS. J. F. NAVARRO, ROBERT O'BRIEN, C. A. HUBBARD.

LECTURE.

Ladies and Gentlemen:—I need hardly state to you that the subject of which I am to speak to-night is of the highest importance to the welfare of the community. Your kind presence here is a sufficient evidence that you realize the magnitude of the school question, and are anxious to give to it that attention which it deserves. The discussion of the question in private and public, by the press and by the pulpit, only proves how deeply interested are the citizens of this great commonwealth. And if there are some overheated controversies which give expression to unkind and unbrotherly feeling, we attribute it rather to the excitement of the moment, than to any wish to be partial and unjust. It is one of the peculiarities of freedom of speech, that words uttered do injustice to the heart which, after all the acrimony of conflict, loves to be guided by charity. It is better for the cause of truth that one should be too earnest than totally indifferent. Many things are said against us as Catholics, which we are unwilling to credit to our opponents as if they really could mean what they say. For our own part we try never to forget the law of love which stands first upon the great tables of the divine sover-

eignty ; and we would lament nothing so much as the breaking of the precious bond of brotherhood, which in this sacred land of liberty binds us all together in one. Silent be the mouth, and paralyzed be the right arm which here offends against true charity.

The Constitution of the United States guarantees to every citizen the perfect freedom of religion ; and that great charter must fail and pass away ere any State can frame laws which abridge or take away that freedom. We are here with different religions, free and equal before the law, all having the same rights, the same claim to civil protection. We pause not to inquire how this state of division originated among those who call themselves Christians, nor if it be for the welfare of society. We may have our opinions upon that question ; but before the tribunals of justice, before the bar of public opinion, each sect is free to seek its own privilege, to take all just measures to extend its own creed and to provide for its perseverance. We are bound to believe that all are good citizens, zealous for the welfare of our beloved country, and ready to hear the voice of reason. We must take facts as we find them, and look at the constituent parts of our great community as they are. We can only live in harmony by the exercise of mutual kindness, and a constant regard to the civil rights of others. He who tramples upon his neighbor, and seeks to take from him his rights, can never vindicate his own claims.

He has given a blow to the very foundation of all liberty and order ; and if he take not heed the great temple will fall, and anarchy and strife take the place of peace and good-will. He who values not his brother's rights, how can he ask the world to respect his own ?

I propose to speak of a question to-night which has unfortunately sometimes evoked the bitterness of controversy, and even stirred up the embers of bigotry and prejudice. I hope I shall be able to speak so as to satisfy many, while I trust in God I shall offend no one. To those who will reason calmly, who will in the spirit of kindness weigh our arguments, we will present in few words the view which Catholics take of the school question. Our claims shall be so just and our position so reasonable, that we confidently rely upon a favorable judgment before the bar of honest public opinion.

As for those who, relying upon prejudice and the associations of childhood, are prepared to condemn us without a hearing, who need only know that any proposition is Catholic, in order to denounce it, we have no hope to persuade them. Reason is given for naught to such as will not calmly listen to our arguments, and thereby refuse to admit us to the brotherhood of the great human family. We can only pray God to give them a better mind, and to convince them that in the narrow circle of their own self-will the

blind are leading the blind, where no rays of that divine light which illuminates the universe can reach their intellects. Such men are for a day, and, like the insect which lives for its brief hour, are soon forgotten. He only, who has a fair and impartial mind, who is open to every influence of truth, can lift up his head in the array of the noble and godlike, whose aspirations are ever for light and knowledge. He who never reasons, whose treasury of thought is filled with premises never examined, who holds to logical contradictions, who never draws the conclusions from principles he professes, can be no patron of science, art, or religion. The blessed way of truth is closed against him by his own hand,

We enter, then, upon the subject of our lecture with this earnest appeal to a reasonable judgment, and with great confidence in that fairness for which the American public are so honorably distinguished.

We will endeavor clearly and briefly to set before you the Catholic view of the school question, with its grounds; and secondly, will make reply to some of the principal objections which are urged against it.

I.

1. In the first place, there is a wide difference between us and our Protestant fellow-countrymen, in our conception of faith and the essentials of religion. We believe that the whole of revelation was com-

municated to man in and through Jesus Christ, who has intrusted the Church with the office of keeping and teaching his gospel. We believe that while man may find out the truths of the natural order, he can never arrive at supernatural knowledge but by revelation ; and that to a revelation properly authenticated he is bound to submit. We hold also that the salvation of our race is due to the mercy of God, who was in no way bound by his justice to redeem us, when by sin we had lost our title to life eternal. We think, therefore, that he who would be saved, must accept the redemption provided, just as it is ; or rejecting it willfully, in whole or in part, be deprived of all its privileges. We do not leave the question of faith open to the individual mind ; we deliver a fixed and certain creed which has come from God, and which can therefore suffer no alteration ; and we consider this faith necessary to the highest good of the individual, and to the welfare of families and states. All come from him, and depend upon his bounty. All are pilgrims here to a better and enduring country.

We do not, in this place, argue any question between us and Protestants, we are only stating the facts. There are some of them who agree with us very nearly on this point, while there are others who differ from us widely, and even assail our position as one of intolerance and exclusiveness. The principle of applying private judgment to the intrinsic credi-

bility of doctrines revealed, is one which in the present constitution of the human mind destroys the possibility of any fixed belief. While we admit the supremacy of reason in its own sphere, and are willing to submit the proofs of our creed to rigid demonstration, we cannot allow that the word of God can be improved upon, or set aside with any advance in human knowledge.

2. Consistently, therefore, with such views we hold that the maintenance of our religion is of the highest importance, even of absolute necessity to the human race. We, as members of the human family, as citizens, as true philanthropists, can only labor for the preservation of the faith, and the extension of the Church to whose care it is committed. If we did not do this with the creed we maintain, we should be untrue to our highest convictions, and so traitors to God and to mankind. The Catholic Church in our view represents Christ, who is the fountain of light and life, as she is the instrumentality by which he teaches and sanctifies us.

It needs no argument to establish that, with such a notion of religion, education becomes one of the most important functions of the ecclesiastical body, and that the priesthood which has been commissioned, as we believe, to teach all nations, cannot discharge itself of its responsibilities in this regard. We do not see how religion can be separated from education. To us it is an

impossibility. The Church has always given a clear statement of her own duty in this matter, and in days when there was no denial of her prerogative, there was no need of explanations. In our own day the Supreme Head of the Church has many times spoken with clear definitions of the great questions which affect modern society. We quote from the forty-fifth, forty-sixth, forty-seventh, and forty-eighth sections of the Syllabus of Pope Pius IX., 1864, in which are contained opinions declared contrary to the faith of Catholics :

“The whole government of public schools in which the children of any Christian State are educated (Episcopal seminaries only being in some degree excepted), may and ought to be given up to the civil power, and in such sort, that no right of interference by any other authority be recognized as to the management of the schools, the regulation of the studies, the conferring of degrees, and the choice or approbation of the teachers.

“Even in ecclesiastical seminaries, the method of studies to be adopted is subject to the decision of the State.

“The best constitution of civil society requires that popular schools which are open to the children of every class, and public institutions in general which are devoted to teaching literature and science, and providing for the education of youth, should be with-

drawn from all authority of the Church, and from all her directing influence and interference, and subjected to the complete control of the civil and political authority, so as to accord with the ideas of the rulers of the State, and the standard of opinions commonly adopted by the age.

“Catholics may approve of that method of instructing youth, which, while putting aside the Catholic faith and the Church’s authority, looks exclusively, or at least chiefly, to the knowledge of natural things, and the ends of worldly social life.”

Taught, then, by the Head of our Church, and by the inspiration of our creed in the ages all along, we hold the direct contrary of these propositions condemned. We cannot give up to the State the management of education, nor relinquish a duty which we believe God himself has intrusted to us. With us faith is the great thing necessary, and every other end, however useful or honorable, is to be subordinated to this.

The councils of our own national Church having in view the wants of our people, have earnestly recommended the establishment of Catholic schools which shall be under the direction of the pastors, and in all things subject to their supervision. And where this cannot be done, the priesthood are commanded to watch with unceasing care over the children of their flock, lest the snares of vice and irreligion entrap the guileless, and the seeds of infidelity be sown in the

minds of youth. Here, though we are more exact and stringent in practice, we do not differ in principle from some other religious denominations who have spoken strongly upon this subject, and have urged the foundation of parochial schools within their communions. In the Catholic Church in all matters of faith and morals, we are a unit all over the wide world. The different pastors are all united in the recognition of their trust, the responsibility of the souls of the children whom God has placed under their charge. Their conviction is that of St. Paul, "Let a man look upon us as the ministers of Christ and the stewards of the mysteries of God. Here now it is required among stewards that a man be found faithful." Christian parents also have their great and weighty office toward their own offspring. They must see to their religious education. Woe be to them if they neglect this duty, for fearful will be their account before the Judge of all. No specious excuses will avail before his throne.

3. With such views of faith and of our duty it is easy to see that the Public Schools, as they exist in our community, will not answer our purpose, and this for very convincing reasons.

First, they cannot be absolutely non-sectarian. Religion cannot be eliminated from all studies in which so often the questions of faith and morals will arise, which demand from the teacher a decision.

Even if the text-book do not give a positive opinion, the intelligent pupil will ask for a solution of the many difficulties that arise, and the sentiments of his professor will go far to make up his conclusions. No man can be without a religious bias of some sort. A mind which is a sheet of white paper is an impossibility. And even prejudice and early associations influence most men far more than perhaps they realize. We have also serious grounds of complaint against the text-books which many times have been in use. They have misrepresented our creed; and while giving false historical statements, have presented a wrong notion of our principles of morality. We believe that at this day, in our own State, the directors of Common Schools are anxious to remedy this evil, and are disposed to exclude the text-books which attack our religion. Yet, with the utmost care, the school will have its religious bias, and the various authors who are adopted as standards, cannot, if they would, entirely disguise the sentiments which make up their convictions upon the highest and noblest questions. And, be it remembered, in a community where there are so many conflicting religious denominations, there can be no common ground on which all may meet. There are intelligent and influential sects who reject the divinity of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity. There is no one point on which all agree.

The use of the Bible in the schools is objected to by

many, and with reason, from their own point of view. Catholics do not accept the Protestant version. Protestants do not accept ours. Those who do not admit the authority of the Scriptures do not naturally wish them to be read where their children are educated. There is no remedy for this difficulty. As far as our opinion goes, we have never regarded the reading of appropriate portions of the Bible as any great objection in itself to our Public Schools, provided that it be done without comment, or attempts at interpretation. Formerly it was customary for the teacher to open the exercises of the day with prayer, in which very often he embodied his own notions of Scripture, and the peculiarities of his religious creed. To a great extent we believe that this practice has been renounced. Still in many ways the pupil will imbibe the opinions of those whom he respects, and from whom he expects to derive light in the arduous way of knowledge. It seems to us that no argument is needed to satisfy the honest mind of these truths, which are, after all, facts. The exclusion of the Bible would not render the Common Schools satisfactory to us, for this alone would not make them non-sectarian.

Secondly, we need something more than non-sectarian schools if such could be found. Negations in religion and science do not suit us. We believe that religion cannot be separated from education. We are sure that the attempt to make such a separation will

lead to the production of a race of infidels. There are those who think that morality can be taught independently of any fixed faith, thus ignoring revealed religion altogether, and trusting to the lights of the natural order. We know that this cannot be done. The whole code of morality depends upon revealed faith, and cannot stand when positive creeds are destroyed. The explanation and application of the ten commandments involve many vexed questions among the various sects. And, let others think as they may, we cannot teach a morality which does not rest upon Jesus Christ as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending of all truth. Eminent authorities, not Catholic, are with us on this question. We quote from the farewell address of Geo. Washington, whose honored name will, I trust, ever hold its place in the affections of our people: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert those great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to revere and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it be simply asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of *religious* obligations desert the oaths which

are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that *morality can be maintained without religion*. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

With our convictions of duty, no schools will satisfy us but those in which we can *teach* our religion ; opening its beauties upon the expanding mind from day to day, training the heart with the intellect, and preserving the harmonies of science and faith. We do not believe in leaving the religious instincts to be perverted, or in cultivating the understanding to the expense of the duty we owe to our almighty Creator, and merciful Redeemer. We do not hold to educating man as if he were the creature of time, and not the child of eternity.

4. We cannot teach religion in the Public Schools, and we have, in the present state of our society, no right to ask to do it. We desire to respect the rights of all others before the law which gives to us the shield of its protection. Hence we are obliged to establish schools of our own, where we can give a truly Christian training to our children. This, in great measure, we have done ; this we are bound to do to the full extent of our abilities. No one, as far as we

know, questions our right to instruct the Catholic community, and to be faithful to our sense of duty in our own sphere. Thank God, our country guarantees to us this privilege, which no violence of political strife or religious animosity will take away. This much we prophesy.

But the practical question of support comes up, and here while we present our just and reasonable claim, we meet with some unlooked for opposition. We hope we shall demonstrate that this opposition is unjust and anti-American. Let us take the city of New York alone for an example. Nearly half the population here belong to the Catholic Church, which certainly has one half of the children. In the report which was made in the spring of 1869, we find twenty-six parish schools established in the city, with an attendance of twenty thousand children. The annual expense for the support of these schools exceeded one hundred and four thousand dollars, while the value of school property held for this purpose of education amounted to over a million. This property was purchased by many sacrifices on the part of Catholic parents, while the sum necessary to maintain the schools has cost priest and people much care and anxious toil. Is it strange or wonderful that the State in its hall of legislation has recognized our claim for assistance, and has, in the American spirit of charity, come to our aid?

Now our position is this. It seems to be taken for

granted that the civil power should provide for the great charities of the body politic, that it should relieve distress and want, and extend its succor to the poor and ignorant. Education is one of these charities, and not the least in importance. To support the State in its beneficent mission large funds are raised by taxation. We Catholics admit the propriety of this rule, and bear our share of the burden. Have we not, then, a just claim to our proportion of this fund? We cannot use the Common Schools, because they answer not our end, nor satisfy our consciences. When we educate children and pay our proportion of the tax, have we no right in justice to our share of the public money, which we, as well as others, have contributed? We say, therefore, "either remove all taxes for education, or give to us our just share of the fund." We say that every religious denomination which has its own schools (and every one ought to be at liberty to have them), shall draw its proportion of the sum raised by general taxation, according to the number of children which it educates. That which is fair to one is fair to all, and it is better to settle upon a just and honorable basis the support of our schools, than to leave us to temporary aid from year to year, the very occasion of which gives rise to dissensions which do not tend to the harmony and quiet of the commonwealth.

There are many who agree with us in this position. If they are not anxious to have denominational schools

for themselves, they see the propriety of our demands. Let men reason as they may, there is no other just and peaceful course in a State where there are different religions, and where the civil rights of each one must be respected. The very principle in question has been applied to our charitable institutions ; why not to our schools ? Eminent statesmen abroad have seen the necessity, if not justice, of our claims ; and for their own countries have advocated the principles which we maintain. The governments of Europe almost without exception have seen the propriety of denominational schools, as the only possible plan to secure harmony and general education. We will do well to learn from their enlarged experience, as also from their broad statesmanship.

Permit me to delay you here for a moment in order to present a brief account of the systems adopted in the different States of Europe. It seems to us that the very facts we shall produce will go very far in the way of advancing our thesis.

“Germany,” says Mr. Joseph Kay, of Trinity College, Cambridge, “will one day be lauded by all Europe as the inventor of a system securing in the best possible manner, guidance by the greatest intelligence of the country, the cheapest manner of working, the fostering of local activity and local sympathies, and the cordial assistance of the ministers of religion. Disputes about separate or mixed schools are unheard of in

Prussia, because every parish is left to please itself which kind it will adopt."

One of the leading Roman Catholic Counselors of the Educational Bureau in Berlin assured me that they never experienced any difficulty upon this point. "We always," he said, "encourage separate schools when possible, as we think religious instruction can be better promoted in separate than in mixed schools; but, of course, we all think it better to have mixed schools than no schools at all; and when we cannot have separate schools, we are rejoiced to see the religious sects uniting in the support of a mixed one. When mixed schools are decided on by the parochial committee, the teacher is elected by the most numerous of the two sects; or if two teachers are required, one is elected by one sect, and the other by the other, and in this case each conducts the religious education of the children of his own sect. But when only one teacher is elected, the children of those parents who differ from him in religious belief, are permitted to be taken from the school during the religious lessons, on condition that their parents make arrangements for their instruction by their own ministers."* This just and honorable principle is carried through the whole educational system of Prussia.

"The Government," says the same authority we have

* Joseph Kay, quoted by Hon. Henry Barnard in his work on *National Education in Europe*, p. 79.

quoted, "does not encourage the establishment of mixed schools, as they think that in such cases the religious education of both parties, or at least of one of them, often suffers. If a mixed school is established in any parish, and the teacher is chosen from the most numerous sect, and if the minor party becomes discontented or suspicious of the education given in the school, it is always at liberty to establish another school for itself; and it is this liberty of action which preserves the parishes where the mixed schools exist from all intestine troubles and religious quarrels, which are ever the most ungodly of disputes. In leaving the settlement of this matter to the parishes, the Government appears to have acted most wisely; for in these religious questions any interference from without is sure to create alarm, suspicion, and jealousy, and cause the different parties to fly asunder instead of coalescing. All that the Government does, is to say: "You must provide sufficient school room, and a sufficient number of good teachers, but decide yourselves how you will do this." So the great difficulty arising from religious difference has been easily overcome.

The consequence of these just provisions has been, not only the general satisfaction of the people, but a happy progress in education, which becomes almost universal throughout the kingdom. "In 1844 the Prussian people had established 23,646 schools, which were attended by 2,328,146 children, and were direct-

ed by 29,639 highly educated teachers, of whom nearly 28,000 were young professors who had obtained diplomas and certificates of character at the Normal Colleges. Could this magnificent result have been attained if the people, the clergy, and the government had not been at unity on this great question?" * The Normal Colleges are widely dispersed throughout the country, and are conducted on the same fair and equitable principles. "In each province there are five or six of these institutions. In each county there are generally two. If the inhabitants of a county are composed of Catholics and Protestants in pretty equal proportions, one of these colleges is devoted to the education of the Catholic teachers, the other to that of the Protestant. If nearly all the inhabitants of a county are of one faith, both of the Normal Colleges are devoted to the education of the teachers of this faith; and the teachers of the minority are educated in one of the colleges of a neighboring county. There are only two Normal Colleges in Prussia, where Catholic and Protestant teachers are professedly educated together. The directors of these great institutions are chosen from among the clergy. The director of a Catholic college is chosen by the Catholic bishop of the province, in which the college is situated; and the director of the Protestant college by the ecclesiastical authorities of

* *National Education in Europe*, p. 104.

the Protestant Church ; subject, however, in both cases to the approbation of the Minister of Education in Berlin, who has the power of objecting, if an unsuitable or injudicious choice is made."

We proceed to notice briefly the laws of other European States upon this important subject:

In Saxony "congregations of different religious persuasions are allowed to establish schools in their circuit, and if no other school exists than one, so established, all the children of the circuit are bound to attend it ; they are not, however, required to take part in the religious instruction."

In Wirtemberg, "if in a community of different religious confessions, the minority comprises sixty families, they may claim the establishment and support of a school of their own confession, at the expense of the whole community. The expenses are paid by the whole community, and without regard to religion, by each individual in proportion to the amount of taxes paid by him."

Austria is in the main a Catholic country, and yet we find within this vast empire the same respect paid to the different religious creeds as in Germany.

The system of education is conducted by institutions of various ranks ; but in all, just regard is paid to the wishes of the communities. "The popular schools are inspected and directed by the parochial incumbent, who, with a view to this duty, is bound to receive in-

struction previous to his induction to a benefice in the system of scholastic management. He is required, at least twice a week, to examine and catechise the pupils, and to impart to them religious instruction. Where children of different creeds are intermixed in one school, religious instruction and catechisation are confined to the last hour of the morning and afternoon attendance, during which hour the non-Catholics are dismissed, to receive instruction from their respective pastors; but where the number of non-Catholics is sufficiently great to support a separate school, the minister of that persuasion, whatever it may be, is charged exclusively with the same duties as, in the general schools, are imposed on the parish priest. To ministers of all professions an equal recourse is, by the terms of the ordinances, allowed to the aid of the poor fund, and of the grants from the government.”*

In Switzerland “each canton is divided into a certain number of communes, or parishes, and each of these communes is obliged by law to furnish sufficient school room for the education of its children, and to provide a certain salary, the minimum of which is fixed by the cantonal government, and a house for each master it receives from the Normal College of the canton. These communal schools are, in the majority of cases, conducted by masters chosen from the most numerous

* *National Education*, p. 327,

religious sect in the canton, unless there are sufficient numbers of the different religious bodies to require more than one school, when one school is conducted by a master belonging to one sect, and the other by a master chosen from a different sect. The children of those parents, who differ in religion from the master of the school, are permitted to absent themselves from the doctrinal lessons, and are required to obtain instruction, in the doctrines of their own creed, from clergy of their own persuasion."

Catholic France providing for the education of her people, in a system well elaborated and carefully managed, has in the same manner made allowance for religious differences and the wishes of parents. I have before me a table of statistics made in 1837. At that time there were 56,812 primary schools set apart for the Catholics, 1,080 for the Protestant population, and 115 for the Jews, while there were 1,831 mixed schools where all the children could be educated, due regard being paid to the doctrines of their various creeds.

"The number of the Catholic population being, in 1843, over thirty-three millions, it follows that there was one primary school for every 581 Catholics. The Protestant population being one million, there was one primary school for every 1,018 Protestants. The reason why the proportion of schools for the Protestants is so small, is that very many of these children attend

the mixed schools. The number of Jews being 80,000, there was one school for every 695 Jews."

We pass over those countries in Europe where there are scarcely any religious differences, to notice for a moment the system prevailing in Russia.

"The ecclesiastical schools, which are among the oldest in the empire, constitute an important educational agency in the State, not only as institutions for educating the clergy, but for elementary instruction generally. In respect to management, they are divided into two classes: those which belong to the Greek Church, under the holy Synod, and a committee of that body; and those which belong to other forms of worship, which are under the direction of the minister of the interior, and the consistory of each denomination. The ecclesiastical schools are of two grades. The higher seminaries are strictly theological schools, of which there are twenty-one belonging to the Greek Church, thirteen to the Catholic, fourteen to the Armenian, eight to the Lutheran, eleven to the Mohammedan, and two to the Jews, with over four thousand students. Besides these, there are elementary schools for the sons of the clergy, viz., 407 belonging to the Greek Church, 275 to other denominations, with over seventy thousand pupils in attendance."*

We are sorry we can not show as fair a spirit in

* *National Education*, Barnard, p. 628.

the school system of England and Ireland. Yet, with all the prejudices that have prevailed since the Reformation, it seems to be regarded as settled, that the Government ought not to refuse aid to Catholic schools, nor to interfere with the liberty of conscience. The State offers aid towards the erection of school buildings, and gives assistance in other ways, from which the various religious denominations are not excluded. In 1851 there were 585 Catholic schools to about 18,000 connected with the Church of England.

Ireland certainly has labored under a persistent persecution for which history has no parallel. "For nearly the whole of the last century, the Government labored to promote Protestant education, and tolerated no other. Large grants of public money were voted for having children educated in the Protestant faith, while it was made a transportable offense in a Roman Catholic to act as a schoolmaster, or even as a tutor in a private family." England has expunged these laws from her statute book, but she has not yet quite wiped away the stain. The national system now in existence is an approach at least to justice, and an acknowledgment of past error. "This system knows no distinction of party or creed in the children to whom it proffers its blessing, and at the same time it guarantees to parents and guardians of all communions, according to the civil rights with which

the laws of the land invest them, the power determining what religious instruction the children over whom they have authority shall receive.”*

Though this plan be less just than that of Prussia, and other nations of Europe, yet it is better, in our judgment, than the system of Common Schools here, from which every privilege of religious education is taken away.

The State is willing to do something for the Christian instruction of its children, while here we must consent to a divorce, in our view impossible, between knowledge and religion, or maintain schools at our own expense.

We have also the authority of many eminent statesmen of our own country, who are with us on this question. Governor Seward, in his message of 1840, thus speaks: “The children of foreigners, found in great numbers in our populous cities and towns, are too often deprived of the advantages of our system of public education, in consequence of prejudices arising from difference of religion or language. It ought never to be forgotten, that the public welfare is as deeply concerned in their education as in that of our own children. I do not hesitate, therefore, to recommend the establishment of schools in which they may be instructed by teachers speaking the same language with themselves, and professing the same faith.”

* *National Education*, pp. 678-9.

II.

Having thus briefly stated the views of Catholics upon this very important subject, we proceed to notice some objections which are made against the ground we have taken. We are well persuaded that these objections, however sincere they may be, are not founded in reason. Our reply to them will, we hope be found satisfactory. And before we enter upon this department of our lecture, let us say that we speak with perfect frankness, and here disclose our whole mind, leaving nothing to be understood, and having no secret plans behind the scene to be carried out when the opportunity shall arise. We make this avowal because we are often accused of being crafty and designing, and of using arts to further the ends we propose. This accusation is, so far as we know, unjust. At least upon this great question we trust the community will believe that we are acting with perfect candor.

1. It is urged that by schools under Catholic control which shall be subsidized by the State, we wish to propagate our religion. We freely admit that we do wish to preserve our faith, and to teach it to our children. But is this an objection? Have we not the right to do this? Nay, ought not every religious denomination to labor for its own extension, consistently with its principles? Will the public respect a communion that cares not for its own existence, and in which the great

principles of a creed lie so loosely that they are of no consequence? Surely we cannot be blamed when thus we labor for that which seems to us the highest good of society. When we work in our own domain and interfere not with the rights of others, are we not in honesty using the privilege guaranteed to us by the Constitution? If we do nothing unlawful, if we violate no right of the State or family, nor go searching after children against the will of their parents, are we encroaching upon the privilege of any citizen? Is it not true here that every religious denomination is equal before the law, and that there is no community proscribed by the civil power?

With our views of duty, if we did not seek to extend our creed by all honorable means, and especially strive to educate our own children, we would be unworthy citizens and useless members of the body politic. For he who has no conscience, or having the sense of right and wrong, trifles with it in practice, is too base to be a member of a brotherhood of free and enlightened men.

In this respect we certainly do not differ from other Christian denominations, who desire to establish their own schools, and labor for the propagation of their own doctrines.

2. A second objection argues that the State in recognizing by endowment our schools, would seem to favor a particular religion. But this argument is surely

unsound. The State has nothing to do with religion ; it only recognizes the fact that there are so many children who belong to a particular communion, and gives to them their proportion of the fund which has been raised by taxation. Who compose the State, if not the people who are to be benefited by such a provision ? There are some speakers and writers who seem to consider us here as a foreign colony, and not a part of the great American commonwealth. We utterly object to this injustice ; for whether we are foreigners, or “to the manor born,” we are all citizens of this republic, to which by solemn oath we have devoted ourselves, and with whose prosperity all our earthly interests are connected. This land is our only home this side the grave.

And when the State gives equal aid to every child, no matter what may be his creed, where is the chance to favor any particular religion ? When every church stands on the same ground and enjoys the same privilege, where is the injustice or partiality ?

A leading journal of this city, after admitting the European practice of denominational schools, objects to the system of supporting sectarian institutions by a common tax. The writer says : “The people of this country will not have sectarianism in schools, and will not be publicly taxed to teach the doctrines of sects either to their own children, or the children of anybody else.”

For what "people of this country" does this journal speak? It is certainly not the Catholic people; for he wishes them to be taxed for schools which they cannot use, and then forced to support their own institutions besides. Is this equal to "taxation without representation," of which so much was said in the memorable days of 1776, or is it not? What does it sound like? The Catholics, who form no insignificant portion of the American people, are willing to be taxed for sectarian schools, and there are many others who are of the same mind. Is not every religious society willing to be taxed for its own children?

It is all very well to say to us: "Here are the Common Schools whose doors are open to you, as to all others; enter in and enjoy their privileges." But suppose we cannot enter in without the violation of duty or conscience, from our point of view. Will they respond to us: "You have no right to have such a conscience; and if you have, you must be the sufferer for it." If I have no right to have my conscience, then in what favored land shall man vindicate to himself religious liberty? We waste not your time with a reply to the unfairness of this species of persecution.

"The people will not support sectarian schools." When the States of Europe have seen the necessity of leaving the different religions of their subjects free, will the great American republic put shackles upon a large portion of its citizens, and tax them for a fund

which can be of no use to them? We have urged that the Common Schools are sectarian, that they do teach some shape of belief, and that they cannot be absolutely without bias. If they taught no religion whatever, and were studiously to avoid the name of God or of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, they would in our sense be sectarian, for they would teach immorality, and so sap the foundations of our creed. We believe that schools where children are brought together without the slightest religious influence to guide them, are nurseries of vice. We do not speak from conjecture, we speak from experience and positive knowledge. It is, then, very unfair to say that the people will not have sectarian schools, and then to have schools which are capable of being made anything that the teachers or the local authorities desire them to be. If any church wishes to have the education of its own members, it has that right; and that portion of the people can fully express its own will. We have heard it proposed to force all the children, of whatever creed, to go to the schools established by the State; but we venture to assert that such an act of intolerance will never take place under the American flag.

3. It is again urged against us that we wish to attack the Common School system which is dear to the memories and habits of our country; and that if our claims be allowed, that system will fall. In an-

swer to this, we say : First, that if our claim be just, it ought to be granted us. No one has a right to take away that which really belongs to another. Secondly, for ourselves we emphatically deny any hostility to the Public Schools. We do not wish them destroyed. If the people wish them to exist, they ought to exist, and we do not see how they can be touched. The education of our children in institutions of our own will surely not injure others. If other religious denominations desire schools of their own, they have the right to have them, and have the same privilege as we have. If they do not wish them, then they will naturally patronize the Common Schools. We do not see how the plan we propose can interfere with the wishes of the people properly expressed. If the common system cannot be sustained without forcing a large portion of the community against their will, and depriving us of our just rights, then in a land like ours, and, in fact, in any land, it ought to fall. As for any practical difficulties that may arise in the consolidation of districts, or the changes that will be necessary when denominational schools are established, they will in time be easily arranged. They are not one-half so great as those which at present exist, and inflict injury upon a large portion of the population. It is quite well established here, that although the majority must rule, the minority shall never be oppressed or forced to submit to tyranny. If prejudice against the Catholic

religion should be the real motive for denying our children their part of the Educational Fund, would not the whole opposition to us amount to something like religious persecution? We are quite satisfied, that if the Episcopalians, or Congregationalists, should unite in demanding separate schools, they would very soon obtain from the public their just demand. The journalist says, that the Common School system is the peculiar glory of our republic. We leave him to his own opinion upon this point, with full liberty. All we insist upon is, that it is palpably unjust to force it upon any large and respectable minority. It would be unjust in any form of government, even in a despotism; it is still more so in this fair land of equal rights.

4. It is again objected that our schools are behind the public institutions in the order of progress and literary merit; and that the State should have the power to inspect all the establishments which depend in any degree upon its charity. We reply, that it is quite possible that many of our parochial schools are not equal to those which enjoy the full patronage of the Government. But we have many disadvantages in our way, and find it very difficult to raise the funds necessary to our great and increasing wants. Give us a little more time and seasonable help, and we will endeavor not to fall below the high standard which we have admired in many, though by no means in all, of our Common Schools.

As to the inspection which the State may wish to have over denominational institutions which are under its protection, we are willing to yield all the community may fairly require. The Legislature may appoint a committee to examine both the teachers and the schools, and to put us in competition with any others. They may thus be able to satisfy the public that we are truly executing our trust, and that the literary honor of America's sons and daughters shall not suffer in our hands. On equal terms we are willing to enter the lists of strife for distinction. "Let him that merits the prize, wear it."

5. The last argument used against our claim, which we shall here notice, is that Catholicism is hostile to our free institutions, to the advances of science and art, and that we really wish to keep our people ignorant. Therefore, it is the duty of the community to crowd us down and to draw away our children from such influence.

If this were really so, it is a serious question whether, in a country like ours, it would be right to fight us with the strong hand of power. It would surely be better to combat us with argument, to seek to lead us to the truth by kindness, which ever is more potent than brute force. Truth cannot be put down by arbitrary laws. Oppressed and driven to the earth, it will ever rise again. The American public are too fair to see any of its great brotherhood manacled for opinion's sake.

But we deny each and every part of the objection. Catholicism is not hostile to our free institutions. We cherish love to country next to love to God. Have we not proved this in times past, in days of trial and fear? Who have stood up more boldly in the red field of battle than our Catholic citizens? Let the thousand crosses upon our soldiers' graves attest the cause for which they died, and which they loved next to their faith. We take not from the lustre of any whose names are inscribed on the immortal roll of fame, when we assert that there are no brighter laurels than those that deck the brows of our living heroes, no sweeter requiems than those which are sung over our honored dead. Pardon us, if we say, there are none who love better this land of freedom, there are no truer citizens in life and death, than are we. Our religion makes us devoted to our country and its welfare, and we shall abjure our faith before we can prove traitors to the Constitution under whose beneficent light we enjoy the full privileges of Christian liberty. We believe that the principles of our creed, rightly understood, are even necessary to the permanence of institutions like ours, which can only stand upon the strong and immovable foundations of true morality, a morality which has God for its author, speaking harmoniously by reason and by revelation.

The future will test the truth of our convictions.—As to progress in science and art, and advance in all

that enriches human life, we may challenge the rivalry of those who differ from us. We do not consider the researches of modern philosophy, nor the inventions of the nineteenth century, as the great end of man, nor as commensurate with his dignity as an immortal, intelligent agent. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul." Yet are we most anxious to aid any search after knowledge, any progress in art. Surely we need hardly appeal to Catholic lands which have raised such mighty trophies of genius, nor to the cradles of music, and painting, and sculpture. Our religion, with its grand esthetic beauty, is the mother of all that is high and holy in the heart, the inspirer of those supernatural impulses which make the painter and the poet.

Only in one thing can we admit no progress. In the faith which we received from God we can allow no improvement. Man, with all his mightiest struggles, can never be so wise as when he listens obediently to the divine voice. There, from the great fountain of truth, shall he learn true wisdom. Thus, and thus alone, shall he ascend above his own plane, and converse with angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, thus approach the infinite source of light. Change in faith is the denial of truth revealed. It is to affirm that God has never really spoken; for with increasing light God can never contradict himself. It is to throw man back upon the natural order, and to con-

sign him to the misery and darkness of skepticism. This is eminently progress backward. Man may move forward in his own order. When God speaks, the shadows of doubt must flee away from the true mind.

The charge, therefore, that we wish to keep our people in ignorance, and refuse them freedom of thought, is surely only the murmur of an unenlightened or unfair adversary. Sometimes in even great minds the dark lines of prejudice make fearful deformities, and give birth to many misrepresentations. Let us be just to others. Let the golden rule be our unvarying law. "Do to others as you would that they should do to you." Why are we anxious for schools and colleges, and all establishments that may edify and improve mankind? Why do so many of our fold forsake all worldly ties, and devote themselves to the instruction of the ignorant, without even the compensation of earthly reward? We say to the fair and enlightened people of this country, "help us in the work of education, grant us what we ask, and we place our judgment in your hands." "Come to our schools and see if, while we teach religion and charity, we put any shackles on the intellect, or forbid the freedom of thought." Nowhere is there greater freedom than within that vast communion where the lines of faith and opinion are clearly drawn. We are not free to question our faith, neither is any man at liberty to deny the veracity of God. That the truths of Cath-

olic faith have been revealed by heaven, we stand ready to prove by all fair arguments in the lists of honorable controversy. We admit every possible discussion upon the evidences of our creed, upon the extrinsic credibility of our doctrines. Here is the point of departure between our system and that of many of our countrymen. We demand rigid proof of the evidence on which we rely ; but once admit a revelation ; and liberty to doubt what the Most High declares is no freedom, but slavery and ignorance. It seems to us that there are no more heavily manacled intellects than some of those who call themselves the champions of modern thought. For when the clear light of faith is withdrawn, the benighted traveler will follow every *ignis fatuus* that gleams in his dreary way. Would that we could remove this misconception from the minds of men. Freedom of thought in its own proper sphere is the peculiar glory of the Catholic religion. Witness the mighty reasoners and thinkers of our theological schools. Where are their equals ? Every member of our communion, from the humblest layman to the highest ecclesiastic, enjoys the most perfect liberty,—the true liberty—the liberty of the children of God, such freedom, only in our degree, as crowns the blessed in heaven where they see face to face the ineffable, uncreated truth.

There are no demagogues with us to lead away a multitude who hang on the lips of a preacher, and

make him their oracle. Talent, zeal, piety, all have their noble career in our fold. The Church has a field for every high impulse, a home for every generous heart. The banner of self-sacrifice goes before her armies. It is the standard of the cross. But when human pride perverts the gifts of God, and individuals rise to seek themselves, and not the bounteous Author of all good, they fall from their high place, like lead in the waters, and are soon forgotten. We Catholics have no leader but Christ, and when we obey the Church and the Sovereign Pontiff, who rules the flock, it is for the sake of Him, who is our incarnate God, whom we know to be the light of the temple which his hands have built, the source of solidity to the rock on which he founded the edifice of Christian truth. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, his words shall abide forever."

Here, then, we rest our argument. We submit it to the fair and candid minds of American citizens. Let it not be said that we shall be met by prejudice, and the clamor of a thousand false accusations, which have been again and again refuted. The "No Popery" cry cannot be raised here again. The great American public will not bear it. The day when an honest plea for right can be refused an audience has passed away. The people of this country will weigh in candor all our reasonings, and ere long will be convinced of the justice of our cause. Great and mighty is truth. It must prevail.

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